

# Future Anxiety and its Relationship to Students' Attitude toward Academic Specialization

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## Abstract

Future anxiety is considered one of the main features as a result of economic and social changes, and increasingly emerges among university students not only because of the fear of failure in the study, but also because of the fear of lack of job opportunities – the thing that affects joining their specializations. Hence this study examines the relationship between future anxiety and specialization in the light of variables of gender and specialization. The sample consists of 380 males and females at Najran University (200 students in Humanities and 180 students in Scientific specializations), and their age ranged between 18 to 22 years. The two scales of future anxiety and specialization have been applied. The results showed a negative correlation between future anxiety and specialization, and there are differences in future anxiety for students of Humanity specializations, and gender differences in favor of males; the study also resulted in differences in the attitude towards specialization in favor of students of scientific specializations that have no differences due to gender.

**Keywords:** future anxiety, attitudes, specialization and university students

## 1. Introduction:

Anxiety is one of most common psychological disorders in recent times due to the complexity of the roles of the individual and his/her basic and diverse responsibilities, which is reflected in increasing his/her fears and anxiety of future life (Schmid, Phelps & Lerner, 2011). Muschalla, Linden & Olbrich (2010) points that anxiety is an emotional state whose intensity is associated with thinking in the future and it is categorized into state anxiety and chronic anxiety. It is associated with the future, the job and also work-related fears.

Being the most common feature in our times qualified our times to be probably called an era of anxiety owing to its contradictions and challenges, the lack of opportunities for self-fulfillment, over stress and poor social relationships and values, which leads to a sense of tension and anxiety associated with our inability to predict what will happen in the future.

Future anxiety is one of the anxieties that simultaneously emerged with Toffler's launching of the term Future Shock (1970); Zaleski (1996) indicated this concept which refers to a state of apprehension, fear, uncertainty and anxiety of undesired changes expected to occur in the future. This fear of the future could include a variety of anticipated threats including physical threats, such as illness or accident, or emotional threats, for example the loss of one of the family members. These threats vary in terms of severity, and future anxiety may include the individual's fear of failure in achieving his/her goals and aspirations.

Zaleski (1996) sees that all kinds of anxiety have future dimension on the grounds that the current era creates grave tension due to multiple demands to accommodate and control its changes. Molin (1990) also demonstrated that instead of becoming a source of achieving the objectives and expectations, future may become, for some individuals, a source of fear or terror, and this is basically the source of future anxiety.

Czapinski & Peters (1991) mentions that anxiety sources may be due to two factors, the first is the lack of certainty and knowledge of the events that may occur in the future, and the second is due to the past experiences whether of the individual himself or others that result in his/her foreseeing of future events.

Future anxiety clearly appears in the individual's twenties where this age is the beginning to have a job and a family; therefore we find that university students in the final years are more anxious than others. Sheehan (1986) and Price (2009) points that, in most cases, future anxiety prevails in the second decade and early third decade; and it is relatively rare to begin before the age of fifteen or after the age of thirty five. This was confirmed by Oort et al (2009) whose study was applied to (2220) boys and girls who were divided into three groups, with a time lag of five years between each group. The results showed a decrease of anxiety symptoms during early adolescence and increase in symptoms of anxiety in the late adolescence, the results also showed that girls are more anxious than boys.

It seems that the university students in some specializations are more anxious about the future as a result of loss of confidence in the future according to the experiences that they gained from their fellow alumni who did not have job opportunities and having to work in a different field of their own or to remain unemployed.

Suk, Celina, Ralph, & Konstantinos (2001) confirmed that there are motivating factors associated with the selection of specialization for freshmen who have goals for the future and seek to achieve through their choice of a future career, which should be an attraction for them and provide them with desired social position.

Whenever a university student feels that there are available opportunities to him in the labor market, through providing him with practical training in his specialization needed for the labor market, this reduces the

sense of future anxiety.

Selecting the specialization is one of the most important decisions taken by the man in his life, and such decisions are increasingly important for those who are aware of the importance of setting specific goals for their lives and their future, which they seek to achieve, and who are aware of the requirements of life that keep pace with modern developments in the social, economic, and technological sides – the thing that makes the choice of specialization is an important issue for the student because selecting a specialization determines his life including easy access to a particular job or inaccessibility to it, and then carry on or change it (Williams, 1984).

Therefore, the specialization of students suffers and feels a lot of tension and anxiety when choosing the type of specialization, especially after the termination of the secondary stage, where multiple areas of study are available to them and by which they are qualified to a future career (Zhang, 2007). As a result, these students suffer fear of tomorrow's unknown about their future and the fear of it and what holds for them. Predicting of and thinking about the future are of significance to them in light of the growing numbers of the unemployed, and decreasing the appropriate job opportunities for them and their specializations, which affects their performance and self-competence in achievement and motivation at university.

The students' attitudes are formed according to many sources such as the family, the media and the school environment which are of great importance: the family transfers some of the ideas, concepts and attitudes to the child, the media has the power to create attitudes towards certain specializations, professions or life affairs and schools are reinforcing supporting these attitudes (Bhaskar & Soundiraraj, 2013).

The students' attitude toward education in general and specialization in particular is associated with the importance and usefulness of education in general, and the usefulness of his/her specialization and expected outcomes and motivations and incentives that make him/her reassure the future through this specialization (Rebelo, Candeias & Oliveira, 2012). Consequently the present study attempts to identify the nature of the relationship between future anxiety and the attitude of Najran University students toward specialization.

### **1.1 Future Anxiety:**

Future anxiety is to anticipate the future and having a sense of failure at self-realization and embodiment of aspirations. Future anxiety is a form of anxiety such as death anxiety and social anxiety, which has been defined as "a state of apprehension, fear, uncertainty and fear of undesired changes expected to occur in the future, and there may be a threat that something unreal is going to happen to the individual when he/she is extremely anxious about the future" Zaleski (1996, p.165).

There are several causes leading to a sense of future anxiety, including the lack of confidence in the future, and negative thoughts about it, in addition to the weakness of self-competence and the inability to deal with negative responses to future events which increase the sense of future anxiety of the individual (MacLeod, Williams & Bekerian, 1991).

The ambiguous and unclear future leads to the individual's sense of helplessness and over anxiety, especially when he feels that he is confused and cannot control his future, which makes him unable to think and plan for their future, and this leads to feel continuously future anxiety (Karrie, Craig, Brown & Andrew, 2000).

Moreover, the current labor market cannot meet some specializations, which was needed in the past, which made some of the students in particular specializations are anxious about the future of not being able to find jobs. Therefore, they are unable to start a family and do not have a sense of family and career stability.

Hence, Molin (1990) and Rappaport (1991) assured that instead of being a source of achieving objectives and aspirations, future may become, for some individuals, a source of fear and terror – the thing that basically creates future anxiety for having burdens and unknown expectations.

Likewise, Barlow (2000) stressed that the prospect of known or ambiguous threat is one of the sources of anxiety. It is obvious that foreseeing is related to future events, and anxiety does not arise from the past of the individual but it is a fear of the future full of events that threaten the individual's existence, safety or relief.

The identification of the individual's true capabilities and knowledge of occupations and their requirements and then selecting a future career that meets his abilities will make his choice satisfy his needs and increase his motivation, innovation and output. Perhaps a lot of psychological problems such as stress, vocational maladjustment and future anxiety associated with failed professional life (Blocher & Biggs, 1983).

Molin (1990) indicated that there are many causes for the individual's future anxiety; the most important of these are his inability to differentiate his future outlook from the reality of life in which they live, the inability to foresee the future and a lack of his information to form ideas about the future, feeling of insecurity , negative expectations of the events and ambiguous future that lead to high rate of anxiety. Future anxiety affects the individuals' future decisions resulted in a set of symptoms including disordering behavior, such as feeling of sadness, withdrawal, passivity and inability to face the future and fear of expected social and political changes. Norton, Asmundson and Cox (2000) point that the future state is a vital area in anxiety disorder; no doubt that the expectations and hopes of the future have reflected on the individual's behavior.

The late adolescence is considered as the exploratory stage of the vocational development; the teenager

believes schooling in his lifetime earns him fun and attention so that the study can be a way to achieve future goals. Anxiety extremely occurs when ambitions struggle against negative attitudes of young people toward the future (Super, 1980). Therefore, the researcher has chosen this stage to identify the anxiety they have about the future.

## 1.2 Attitudes

Gibson, Ivancevich and Donnelly (1991, p.70) define attitudes as "a positive or negative feeling, or mental state of a person resulting from experience and which directs the person's response to others, certain things or attitudes". Ustuner, Demirtas and Comert (2009) convey that attitudes are considered one of the most important concepts to study and analyze the individual's behaviors; attitudes affect all of our concepts and behaviors toward different situations and phenomena.

Attitudes are formed through direct experience as well as implicit learning, and may reflect an individual's personality (Zimbardo & Lieppre, 1991). Krech and Crutchfield, 1984; Wood, 2000; Writtig, 2001 reveal that attitudes usually consist of three related components: the cognitive component, which includes the individual's beliefs, thoughts or perceptions and information about some subject or situation; but the emotional component refers to the individual's feelings and emotions about a particular subject or situation, while behavioral component is related to an individual's readiness to carry out acts and certain responses that are consistent with their attitudes.

Rajecki (1990) sees that the three components are consistent; for acquiring a certain attitude, the individual must start perceiving the situation faced, which includes new information and experiences leading to a change in the sentimental, and they seem either accepting or denying the subject, and this forms his behavioral component.

Attitudes have a number of characteristics including: a- specific response; b- long-life stability; c-psychological; d- motivating; e- forming an individual's attitude by certain assessments; f- attitudes cannot be explicitly realized but can be implicitly observed within the individuals' behavior (Ustuner et al, 2009).

To know the individual's attitudes towards a subject or a situation, we should know the incentives or the pros provided by that subject or situation to that person. The students' choosing of a particular specialization and forming positive attitudes toward it connect with the incentives provided by that specialization such as providing job opportunity promptly after graduation, or giving the individual a distinct social status.

The study of Anderson and Anderson (1995) resulted that the pre-placement teachers' attitudes about some specializations are various, where the attitudes are most positive in specialization of Special Education and less positive in the specializations of music , arts and physical education, and these attitudes have obvious and effective role within classrooms as Special Education provides multiple pros. Osunde and Izevbige' study (2006) confirmed that Nigerian teachers' attitudes toward teaching occupation are negative due to low salaries and poor physical conditions for teaching environment.

## 1.3 The relationship between anxiety and attitudes

Future anxiety affects students within the university, where the study of Schonwetter, Struthers and Perry (1995) points out that students with high anxiety cannot follow the instructions of teaching that regulate the work within the university, and their impact of learning environment decreases. Many studies indicated that there is a relationship between attitudes and anxiety such as the study of Mallow et al (2010) and Liu and Chen (2013).

Many researchers have studied the relationship between anxiety and attitudes in a lot of subjects and specializations, such as the study of sport anxiety with the attitude toward sport (Kargar, Tarmizi & Bayat 2010), the study of anxiety and its relationship to attitudes towards science (Sagir, 2012), the study of the attitudes of parents and students toward their academic studies and its relationship with exam anxiety (Shadach & Miller, 2013), the study of university students' anxiety and attitudes towards chemistry (Kurbanoglu & Akin, 2012), and the study of the relationship between the attitude towards learning English as a second language and anxiety (Hussain, Shahid & Zaman, 2011); all these studies indicate that there is a correlation between anxiety and attitudes, which was reflected on the decreasing level of their academic achievement and personal competence.

## 1.4 Research questions

Anxiety about disorders and psychological problems is commonly prevalent among many young people, especially the undergraduate students who link between their real life and the near future that awaits them. No doubt that taking into account the university students' attitudes toward academic specialization helps identify their level of anxiety.

Through his teaching at the University of Najran, it has been obvious for the researcher that there are many students who feel anxious about their future and the availability of jobs they want, there are many students who are not convinced of or satisfied with their specialization but they were compelled to join their specialization according to their academic average at the secondary stage, as well as there are a lot of graduates

in some specializations do not find jobs that suit their hopes and aspirations after graduation, which led to form negative attitudes toward some academic specializations, which make them feel increasing anxiety about their future and their low level of academic achievement and personal competence. This is indicated by the results of some studies such as Kargar et al (2010), Hussain et al (2011), Kurbanoglu & Akin (2012) and Sagir (2012).

Therefore this study examines the following research questions:

- Is there a relationship between future anxiety and the attitude toward academic specialization among students of Najran University?
- Are there differences in the attitude of Najran University students toward specialization due to some variables (academic specialization and sex)?
- Are there differences in the future anxiety among Najran University students due to some variables (academic specialization and sex)?

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Participants

The study sample consists of 380 students in four faculties, (135 students) at scientific colleges, (245 students) at college of humanities, and the participants' ages ranged from 18 to 22 years. 208 male students with an average age (14 and 20) and standard deviation (1.03), 172 female students with an average age of (20.14) and standard deviation (0.98); all students are from Najran University.

### 2.2 Procedures

This study depends upon survey as this approach aims to depict the situation as it is (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). The participants of the sample voluntarily filled out questionnaires without any pressure, and with a guarantee of confidentiality of information.

A survey methodology was adopted for this study. Methodology is a research approach that aims to describe a situation the way it is (Cohen, Manion & Morrison). The study tools have been applied to the students of Najran University, Saudi Arabia. The sample has been divided into two groups: a group studying in scientific specializations (College of Medicine, College of Nursing, Physiotherapy College, Dentistry College, College of Computer Science), and the second group studying in humanity specializations (College of Education, College of Arts and Sciences, College of Sharia and Theology). After the approval of the competent authorities at Najran University, The measures of the study were distributed to the sample of the study. 392 male and female students has participated in this study; twelve questionnaire forms have been excluded because the answer was contrary to the instructions attached with the scales. As a result, the sample became 380 male and female students, and then their data were statistically analyzed.

### 2.3 Measures

#### 2.3.1 Future anxiety Scale:

The researcher has prepared the measure of future anxiety for Najran University students. Procedures have been followed to prepare and develop this measure with reference to education literature related to future anxiety that is defined as "a state of apprehension, fear, uncertainty and fear of undesired changes expected to occur in the future, and there may be a threat that something unreal is going to happen to the individual when he/she is extremely anxious about the future" Zaleski (1996, p.165).

In his preparation of the measure of future anxiety, the researcher referred to the scales that measure future anxiety such as Zaleski (1996), Alexander & Martray (1989), LSAS: Baker (2002) to benefit from them in determining the dimensions of the measure and distributing the phrases.

The present measure, future anxiety, consists of 45 phrases distributed, according to the Likert scale, to four dimensions: A- negative thinking about the future that means "a set of negative ideas and beliefs that beset the individual and produce feelings of failure and anxiety about the future such as [I feel that my future would be ambiguous], [I afraid of not achieving my future goals]; this dimension consists of 11 paragraphs. B- career anxiety that means "the individual's sense of anxiety about the difficulties to have a job in the field of his specialization and be successful and fear of failure to obtain a satisfactory result for him and the expectations of others toward him in his field such as [I expect that the labor market will not be in need of my specialization in the future], [I think I will not get a suitable job for my specialization in the future]; this dimension consists of 10 paragraphs. C- psychosomatic manifestations of anxiety that is meant "a set of mental and physical manifestations and symptoms, in the individual's appearance, resulting from his sense of anxiety and fear of the future such as [I suffer from constant headache when thinking about my future], [I feel nervous or tense when talking with others about the future]; this dimension consists of 12 paragraphs. D- anxiety about the pressures of life that is meant "a set of economic, family, and social pressures faced by the individual in life, which lead to tension, anxiety and depression and negatively affect his view of the future life such as [the growing rise in the cost of marriage and housing makes me anxious], [I feel extremely pressured as a result of my family's

permanent anxiety about my future]; this dimension consists of 12 paragraphs.

The positive and negative attitudes formulated the measure's phrases. Five responses for each paragraph starting from (strongly disagree - I do not agree - I'm not sure - I agree - strongly agree). The scores are distributed from 1 to 5: 1 for "strongly disagree" and five for "strongly agree"; negative paragraph is inversely calculated. The measure consists of 18 negative paragraphs and 27 positive paragraphs. Therefore the extent of the measure ranges from 45 to 225 scores; the high score refers to the high level of students' future anxiety.

A group of reviewers who specialize in the field of Psychology and Mental Health and Educational Measurement and Evaluation in Saudi universities review the measure to check its veracity. The reviewers showed their opinions, suggestions and modifications related to the paragraphs and its contents and reflection of the students' attitudes toward their academic specialization and the appropriateness of the distribution of paragraphs to each dimension of the measure. Some modifications to the measure's paragraphs were conducted, which firstly included 52 paragraphs and became 45 in its final form.

For assessing the consistency of the measure, Cronbach's alpha calculated and reliability coefficient of the whole measure calculated as 0.79; the value of reliability coefficient for each dimension of the measure dimensions is respectively (0.76, 0.80, 0.7 and 0.74).

### **2.3.2 Attitudes toward academic specialization Scale:**

The measure of attitudes toward academic specialization for Najran University students has been prepared. Procedures have been followed to prepare and develop this measure with reference to education literature related to students' attitudes toward specialization, and this attitude is defined as "a positive or negative feeling, or the psychological state of a person resulting from experience and which directs the person's response towards others, certain things, or situations" (Gibson et al, 1991, p.70).

In his preparation of the measure of academic specialization, the researcher referred to the scales that measure it such as Fennema & Sherman (1976) Johanson & Vopava (1985), Rogness (1993), Bennett (2001) and Osborne Simon & Collins (2003) to benefit from them in determining the dimensions of the measure and distributing the phrases.

The educational psychologists' suggestions have been adopted that there are different and multiple components forming the attitudes: emotional component that is how is a person's feel towards things and behavioral component i.e. how can the person's attitude toward things affects his behavior and cognitive component that is the individual's beliefs and ideas about things (Lieberman, 2005; Hockenbury & Hockenbury, 2007).

The measure of academic specialization consists of 39 paragraphs distributed, according to the Likert scale, to three dimensions: **first**, the personal attitudes toward academic specialization that is meant " the student's attitude toward his academic specialization and the convenience of this specialization to their abilities, potentialities, tendencies, desires and aspirations such as [I feel that my specialization is suitable for my personal abilities], [If I have an opportunity to change my specialization, I'll do it on the spur of the moment]; this dimension consists of 14 paragraphs. **Secondly**, societal attitudes toward academic specialization i.e. "the social status of this specialization on the part of community members, community's need to it, community's consideration and appreciation for this specialization and the extent of the community's acceptance or rejection to this specialization" such as [I think the community looks to the field of my specialization with respect and appreciation, [Work in the field of my specialization in the future will bring me a good social position]]; this dimension consists of 12 paragraphs. **Thirdly**, future professional attitudes towards the academic specialization i.e. student's attitude towards a future career, the availability of jobs for this specialization and how this career makes it available for opportunities of innovation, creativity, promotion and appropriate income level such as [My specialization provides me with a job promptly after graduation], [I think future career will allow me to achieve my future aspirations]; this dimension consists of 13 paragraphs.

The positive and negative attitudes formulated the measure's phrases. Five responses for each paragraph starting from (strongly disagree - I do not agree - I'm not sure - I agree - strongly agree). The scores are distributed from 1 to 5: 1 for "strongly disagree" and five for "strongly agree"; negative paragraph is inversely calculated. The measure of academic specialization consists of 13 negative paragraphs and 26 positive paragraphs. Therefore the extent of the measure ranges from 39 to 195 scores; the high score indicates that the student' attitudes towards specialization are highly positive.

A group of reviewers who specialize in the field of Psychology and Mental Health and Educational Measurement and Evaluation in Saudi universities review the measure to check its veracity. The reviewers showed their opinions, suggestions and modifications related to the paragraphs and its contents and reflection of the students' attitudes toward their academic specialization and the appropriateness of the distribution of paragraphs to each dimension of the measure. Some modifications to the measure's paragraphs were conducted, which firstly included 44 paragraphs and became 39 in its final form.

In order to assess the consistency of the measure, Cronbach's alpha calculated and reliability

coefficient of the whole measure calculated as 0.82; the value of reliability coefficient for each dimension of the measure dimensions is respectively (0.79, 0.77 and 0.80).

### 2.3.3 Data Analysis:

Data analysis software used in this search is SPSS 16, descriptive statistics have been used and T Test, correlation coefficients and analysis of variance have been applied.

### 3. Results:

To answer the first question: what is the relationship between future anxiety and the attitude towards specialization requires applying Pearson correlation coefficient between the scores of male and female students to both of future anxiety measure and the measure of attitude towards specialization as shown in Table 1:

(Table 1) shows the correlation between future anxiety and attitude towards specialization (N = 380)

	Negative thinking about future	Career anxiety	Psychosomatic manifestations of anxiety	Life stress	Personal attitudes towards specialization	Community attitudes towards specialization
Negative thinking about future						
Career anxiety	0.241 **					
Psychosomatic manifestations of anxiety	0.236 **	0.251 **				
Life stress anxiety	0.260 **	0.252 **	0.300 **			
Personal attitudes towards specialization	-0.280 **	-0.228 **	-0.305 **	-0.369 **		
Community attitudes towards specialization	-0.200 **	-0.241 **	-0.350 **	-0.283 **	0.394 **	
Future professional attitudes toward specialization	-0.291 **	-0.236 **	-0.288 **	-0.220 **	0.346 **	0.414 **

\*\*P < 0.01

Table 1 indicates that there is a negative correlation at 0.01 between future anxiety and the attitudes towards specialization.

Answering the second question: Are there statistically significant differences in the attitude toward Najran University students' specialization due to some of the variables (academic specialization and sex) requires calculating of means and standard deviations of the students' responses to the measure of attitude toward specialization owing to sex and academic specialization as shown in Table 2:

(Table 2) shows means and standard deviations for the students' responses to the measure of attitude toward specialization:

Dimension	Specialization				Sex			
	Humanity (N= 200)		Science (N=180)		Males in humanities (N=102)		Females in humanities (N=98)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Personal attitudes towards specialization	36.30	7.87	47.45		32.62		39.95	7.47
			6.86		6.32			6.65
Community attitudes towards specialization	33.86		45.17		29.95		38.39	
	7.32		7.41		3.71		7.35	
Future professional attitudes toward specialization	35.85		47.40		31.08		40.81	
	8.44		6.35		5.29		8.25	
							5.35	

(Table 2) indicates the differences between means in the attitude toward specialization according to sex and academic specialization. Analysis of bilateral variance for differences has been applied to the attitude toward specialization according to sex and academic specialization in order to know the significance of these differences, and results indicate that there statistically significant differences between the mean value of students' scores of the measure of attitude toward specialization according to sex and academic specialization. As for sex, f = (5.85, 5.34 and 5.64) respectively in the three-dimensional measure with significance level at (a= 0.01), and for specialization, the value of differences is (174.70, 193.66 and 193.89) in the three-dimensional measure respectively with significance level at (P= 0.01). With regard to the interaction between the variables of sex and academic specialization, the results indicate that there are statistically significant differences at the level of (a = 0.01) due to the interaction between sex and college in favor of male students of science specializations at colleges. As for sex, it was in favor of female students in literary colleges, humanities specialization, and male students at science colleges, where value of differences is (46.97, 97.28 and 126.63) in three dimensions respectively with significance level at (P= 0.01).

Scheffe's test for dimensional comparisons of differences among the means of multiple groups has been applied in order to identify the significance of differences between groups as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3** points out the significance of differences between the means of students' scores in the attitude towards specialization using Scheffe test.

Dimensions	Humanities Specialization (males)	Humanities Specialization (females)	Science specialization (males)	Science specialization (females)
Personal attitudes towards specialization	Humanities (males)	7.06*	15.29*	11.91*
	Humanities (females)	7.06*	8.22*	4.84*
	Science (males)	15.29	8.22*	3.37*
	Science (females)	11.91*	4.84*	3.37*
Community attitudes towards specialization	Humanities (males)		8.69*	16.98*
	Humanities (females)	8.69*		8.92*
	Science (males)	16.98*	8.29*	2.89
	Science (females)	11.59*	2.98	5.39*
Future professional attitudes toward specialization	Humanities (males)		9.72*	17.97*
	Humanities (females)	9.72*		8.24*
	Science (males)	17.97*	8.24*	1.90
	Science (females)	11.63*	1.90	6.33*

\*P < 0.05

**Table 3** indicates that there are statistically significant differences at the level of ( $\alpha = 0.01$ ) in the attitude towards academic specialization between male and female students in the humanities and scientific specialization, while there are no differences among females in the humanities and scientific specialization. Table 2 illustrates the means and standard deviations of the responses of the sample to the dimensions of measure of attitudes towards specialization according to specialization and sex. The results indicated that the differences in the dimensions of the measure of the attitude towards specialization are in favor of scientific specializations i.e. the students with scientific specializations have more positive attitudes than students of humanity specializations. It has been pointed out that females of literary (humanity) specializations are of positive attitudes more than males in the humanity specializations, and males in the scientific specializations have more positive attitudes than that of females in the scientific specializations.

Answering the third question: Are there statistically significant differences for Najran University students' future anxiety due to some variables (academic specialization and sex)? requires calculating of means and standard deviations of the students' responses to the measure of future anxiety according to sex and academic specialization.

**Table 4** shows means and standard deviations for the students' responses to measure of future anxiety.

Dimension	Specialization				Sex							
	Humanity (N= 200)		Science (N=180)		Males in humanities (N=102)		Females in humanities (N=98)		Males in Science (N=133)		Females in science (N=47)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Negative thinking about future	40.11	8.34	32.77	7.08	46.61	4.33	34.33	5.70	31.69	6.17	35.58	8.52
Career anxiety	37.66	7.29	29.37	7.82	43.31	4.45	32.14	4.83	27.81	6.56	33.78	9.31
Psychosomatic manifestations of anxiety	41.95	9.77	32.95	7.89	49.58	4.88	34.00	6.77	31.25	7.35	36.38	8.21
Life stress anxiety	41.99	11.83	30.75	5.32	49.21	4.59	34.46	12.37	29.18	3.87	35.19	6.31

**Table 4** reveals that there are differences among means in the level of future anxiety according to sex and academic specialization. Analysis of bilateral variance for differences has been applied to the level of future anxiety according to sex and academic specialization in order to know the significance of these differences, and the results indicated that there statistically significant differences between the mean value of students' scores of the level of future anxiety according to sex and academic specialization. As for sex,  $f = (47.73, 88.38, 49.31$  and  $28.30$ ) respectively in the four-dimensional measure with significance level at ( $\alpha = 0.01$ ), and for specialization, the value of differences is  $(88.38, 105.01, 114.63$  and  $138.01$ ) in the four-dimensional measure respectively with significance level at ( $\alpha = 0.01$ ). With regard to the interaction between the variables of sex and academic specialization, the results indicated that there are statistically significant differences at the level of ( $\alpha = 0.01$ ) due to the interaction between sex and college in favor of students of humanity specializations at colleges. As for sex, it was in favor of male students in literary colleges, humanities specialization, and female students at science colleges, where value of differences is  $(174.51, 160.77, 193.37$  and  $159.43$ ) in the four dimensions respectively with significance level at ( $P = 0.01$ ).

Scheffe's test for dimensional comparisons of differences among the means of multiple groups has been applied in order to identify the significance of differences between groups as shown in Table 5.

**Table 5** shows the significance of differences between the means of students' scores in future anxiety level using Scheffe test.

Dimensions		Humanities Specialization (males)	Humanities Specialization (females)	Science specialization (males)	Science specialization (females)
Negative thinking about future	Humanities (males)		13.28*	14.92*	10.76*
	Humanities (females)	13.28*		2.69*	2.51
	Science (males)	14.92*	2.69*		4.15*
	Science (females)	10.76*	2.51	4.15*	
Career anxiety	Humanities (males)		11.17*	15.50*	9.52*
	Humanities (females)	11.17*		4.33*	1.64
	Science (males)	15.50*	4.33*		5.97*
	Science (females)	9.52*	1.64	5.97*	
Psychosomatic manifestations of anxiety	Humanities (males)		15.58*	13.20*	13.20*
	Humanities (females)	15.58*		2.38	2.38
	Science (males)	18.33*	2.74*	5.21*	5.21*
	Science (females)	13.30*	2.38	5.12*	
Life stress anxiety	Humanities (males)		14.74*	20.02*	14.02*
	Humanities (females)	14.74*		5.28*	0.72
	Science (males)	20.02*	5.28*		6.00*
	Science (females)	14.02*	0.72	6.00*	

\* $P < 0.05$

**Table 5** conveys that there are statistically significant differences at the level of ( $\alpha = 0.01$ ) in the attitude towards academic specialization between male and female students in the humanities and scientific specialization, while there are no differences in future anxiety level among females in the humanities and scientific specialization. Table 5 shows the means and standard deviations of the responses of the sample to the measure dimensions of future anxiety according to specialization and sex. The results indicated that the differences in the dimensions of the measure of future anxiety are in favor of literary specializations (Humanities) i.e. the students with literary specializations are of higher level of future anxiety than students of scientific specializations. It has become clear that females of literary specializations and scientific specializations are less anxious than males in the humanity specializations.

#### 4. Discussion

Despite the fact that many of the studies investigate the relationship between future anxiety and attitudes, there are few studies that handled the relationship between future anxiety and the attitude towards specialization. Therefore, this study conducted to identify the relationship between future anxiety and Najran University students' attitude towards specialization. In so doing, this study tested the validity of the relationship between future anxiety and the attitude towards specialization. The results showed that the students have high scores in the measure of attitude towards specialization, while low scores in the future anxiety, and students with low scores in the attitude towards specialization have high scores in future anxiety measure. According to previous studies, these results indicate that students who have positive attitudes toward their own specialization, their future anxiety level is low and vice versa.

The results of this study are consistent with the results of several studies which indicated that the positive attitudes toward a specialization and students felt that they can be provided with an opportunity to achieve their goals, the less anxious are the students about specialization, as in the study of Czapinski & Peters (1991), Suk et al, (2001), Hunter & Conner, 2003, the study of Zhang (2007), Rebelo, Candeias & Oliveira, 2012.

In many cases, we find that the students do not choose their own specializations according to scientific and objective basis or to prior knowledge of the nature of these specializations, subjects included if easy or difficult, but we find that there are a lot of wrong habits in the student's choice of specialization, there are those who choose a specialization because of its prominence and those who join a specialization according to the guidance and advice of parents without taking into account their tendencies, abilities and aptitudes, or may join specialization just because he saw his colleagues joined and succeeded in it and forgot that there are individual differences among people that make what suits an individual may does not fit with the other (Zhang, 2007).

The results also show that there are differences between students with scientific and humanity specializations in the attitude towards specialization where we find that students with scientific specializations are more positive about their specialization than students with humanity specialization as they know that there are job opportunities for graduates of these specializations provided by the community as soon as they graduate

from the university. The university also provides them with a variety of services in the field of training and financial support. Tok (2012) referred that university students' attitudes are varied due to the impact of the university environment and the culture of the university, as well as the services and available opportunities provided by the university and the community and the availability of job opportunities for programs enrolled.

The study results indicated that female students in literary specializations have more positive attitudes toward their specialization than male students in the same specialization. Saudi community culture should be taken into account in dealing with results. Al-Modaf (2003) sees that despite the factors of rapid development in Saudi Arabia, the Saudi community is still a traditional one, where its culture greatly affects the attitudes and behaviors of people. The results of Al-Ghamdi's study (1992) indicated that cultural factors have a greater impact than that of education and the media on the attitudes of Saudi students toward work. Thus, this culture makes females tend to work in teaching or have any job, where there is no large mixing, socializing, of gender such as physician or engineer. Therefore, the study sample of females is more interested in humanity specializations than scientific specializations.

Most humanity specialization graduates work in the teaching profession such as graduates of the College of Education and Science and the Arts, so the attitudes of female students are more positive – the thing that has been confirmed by a study of Maliki (2013), which indicated that the significant differences between the attitudes of males and females towards the teaching profession are in favor of females, where it became clear that female teachers' attitudes are more positive than that of male teachers. In the present study, we find that females' attitudes toward humanity specialization are positive and most of them want to work as teachers, where this occupation in Saudi Arabia provides them with privacy and non-mixing with men because there is no coeducation in schools of Saudi Arabia and this corresponds with the traditions and the culture of the community.

Educational literature revealed another reason for female students' positive attitude toward humanity specialization that males' attitudes toward science and technology are more positive than that of females and this may be due to the socialization of children at a young age, where males are more reinforced to play with technology devices than females. There are also many professions associated with males more than females like the engineer and the doctor due to the culture of the community (DeLaeter, Malone & Dekkers, 1989; Jovanovic & King, 1998; Lado, 2011).

Several studies pointed that male students' attitudes towards scientific subjects are more positive than that of females and science-related experiences of female students are less than males. It was pointed out that the number of female students' participations in extracurricular scientific activities is less than the number of participations of male students at 21.9 %. Male students prefer to choose jobs that are relevant to science and scientific activities more than females; maybe due to different community culture (Cannon & Simpson, 1985; Bang & Baker, 2013).

The results also convey that there are no differences between female students' attitude toward scientific and humanity specializations because female students who join scientific specializations are convinced and not compelled to join it as well as their academic average is high; thus They willingly join these specializations conviction which makes their attitudes towards it positive like female students of literary specializations.

The results have showed an increasing level of future anxiety for students with humanity specialization compared to students with scientific specialization and that maybe due to their knowledge and previous experience, provided by the graduates in previous years, about the difficulty of the availability of jobs suitable for their specialization in the labor market. The jobs for the graduates of humanity specialization are almost limited or very few, especially when one knows that the unemployment rate in Saudi Arabia has increased in the recent period, so the greatest premonition among students with humanity specialization is how to get a job with adequate income, and this preconception differs from that of students with scientific specializations, where the labor market in Saudi Arabia provides many of jobs of these scientific specializations with high salaries – as referred to in the study of Bolanowski (2005) that career future anxiety increases in students because of their ideas and beliefs about the labor market and the difficulty to obtain job opportunities, and desired income in case of having a job. MacLeod, Williams & Bekerian, 2001; Zaleski, 2005 demonstrated that the rising suspicions of the individual toward the future can be a source of excessive anxiety. Anxiety also occurs because of their negative ideas about the future as well as their poor self-competence and confidence in dealing with acts causing negative events in the future.

The results of the previous tables turn out that males are more anxious than females due to the nature of Saudi community where males are those who bear the responsibility of raising a family as well as high cost of dowries. But having a good job opportunity with decent salary will help them propose, rent a house and build a family, while females have lower future anxiety rate than that of males because many females in Saudi universities are married, the girl in Saudi community does not take on a lot of marriage expenses, and her family sponsor all her affairs even her marriage either getting a job or not. Therefore, we find that females' anxiety rate is low compared to that of males. This result is consistent with the study results of Hussain et al (2011) that females were less anxious and their attitudes are more positive toward learning English language, but these

results are contrary with the study results of Oort et al (2009), which indicated that females' level of anxiety is higher than that of males maybe due to the different cultural community environment.

The results also showed no differences in the level of future anxiety among females in literary and scientific specialization, and it is due to the conviction of the female students with their specialization, which reduces the level of their anxiety. It is the nature of Saudi community to make a girl's parent responsible for her and sponsor all her affairs even marriage, making the girl not anxious about and afraid of the future about which males are anxious.

In conclusion, it has become obvious that future anxiety is closely associated with the attitude toward specialization, and students' future anxiety had a negative impact on their motivation and attitudes toward education as a whole. The relevant institutions such as universities, the Ministry of Higher Education and Ministry of Civil Service must take measures to modify some specializations to fit with the actual needs of the labor market, even if this led to the cancellation of some specializations with which the labor market is replete or to reduce the number of students enrolled in these specializations, and the expansion of specializations needed by the labor market.

## 5. Conclusion

we conducted this study aiming to examines the relationship between future anxiety and specialization in the light of variables of gender and specialization, The findings of the study differences in the attitude towards specialization in favor of students of scientific specializations that have no differences due to gender.

## Acknowledgements

Financial support from Deanship of Scientific Research, Najran University, Saudi Arabia, (2013 - ) is gratefully acknowledged.

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